

EXTRA TO THE Daily Press

HONGKONG, SUNDAY, 5th MAY, 4.30. P.M.

TOTAL LOSS OF THE STEAMER "DOUGLAS."

During the last two days various and ominous whispers have been current among the shipping portion of the community respecting some accident to the well-known and favourite coast steamer *Douglas*, but of what nature no one seemed to be aware. These reports became more frequently repeated when it was found that the *Kwangtung*, which was overdue, did not arrive, and the worst was feared, and they were unfortunately verified this morning by the arrival of the above steamer, and we have with much regret now to give the details of the *Kwangtung's* operations at the wreck of the *Douglas*, during four days, which have been kindly placed at our disposal by Captain Pitman.

The *Douglas* left this port on Sunday, the 28th ult., for her usual trip to the Coast Ports, having a large general cargo, and \$450,000 in treasure. She arrived at Swatow in due course, and left on the afternoon of Monday, the 29th, left for Amoy. All appears to have gone well until about a quarter past eight that night, the vessel being 35 miles from Swatow, when she struck heavily on the Dioua Rock in the Namon Straits. The cause of the vessel's striking is at present not stated, but report has it that the night being dark and misty Captain Toppin, with his usual care, was afraid the currents would carry the vessel inshore, and he, therefore, had her course altered to a more distant one from the land, and with the result we have now to record. It is useless to speculate on the causes that led to the unfortunate disaster, as doubtless Captain Toppin will be able to fully explain them when the time comes for the usual official enquiry.

The *S. S. Kwangtung* left Amoy for Swatow at 4.40 p.m., on Tuesday, April 30th, with S. Easton, with cloudy weather; 11.30 p.m., passed Bill Island, and hauled in towards Namon Straits.

May 1st (Wednesday) at a little after midnight passed Chinin Head (North about 1½ miles); reduced the speed to 7 knots; 0.45 a.m., made out signals of distress to the S. S. W. of us; steered in that direction, cleared away, and manned all boats, and in a short time came up with the *S. S. Douglas*. Sent the chief officer away in gig, who returned with the information that the *Douglas* was on the Dioua Reef, and nearly full of water. The rest of the *Kwangtung's* boats were immediately sent away with the 2nd and 3rd officers, and chief and 2nd engineers in charge, with as many men as could be spared. In the meantime, the *Kwangtung* was anchored as near the Reef as was prudent, and Captain Toppin came on board. From him I learnt that his steamer ran upon the Dioua Reef at about 8 p.m. of the 29th, that he had succeeded in landing all his native passengers by the ship's boats, during that same night and the following day, (a work of great difficulty and danger, when the distance from land is considered, about 5 miles from the nearest point), and that he had a large quantity of treasure on board. He also informed me that he had dispatched a boat to Swatow with the news, had chartered a junk to remain by him for two days, and had received a promise of protection from a Mandarin junk which came alongside on the 30th.

As usual in such cases, and in spite of the presence of the latter vessel, for which the natives seemed to care nothing at all, the people on board the *Douglas* had had the greatest difficulty in preventing the natives from swarming on board, and it was only by repeated discharges of musketry and doses of canister that they were kept out of the vessel. The steamship *Bombay* arrived from Swatow on the night of the 30th, and Captain Toppin asked Captain Davies to remain by him for a short time, as he expected either the *Yesso* and *Kwangtung* down immediately. After consulting with myself, Captain Toppin decided on transshipping as much of the treasure as could be got at to the *Kwangtung*, as it was impossible to say how long the fine weather might last, and the steamer hold together. The work was at once commenced, and by 4 a.m. 39 boxes had been recovered from the treasure room, and conveyed on board the *Kwangtung*.

During this time the carpenter had cut a large hole, some 8 feet square, in the cabin deck of *Douglas*, and a Malay sailor belonging to the former steamer had dived and pointed out the position of the remainder of the treasure boxes.

At 4 a.m. work was stopped, but at daylight, 5 a.m. the *Kwangtung* was moved in as close to the wreck as was consistent with safety, and work was resumed. At 6, the *S. S. Bombay* left for Swatow. At a little after 8 a.m. boats and native divers sent by the Agent arrived. During the entire day officers, engineers, and crews of both steamers were hard at work, but very little could be done on the flood tide; up to 5 p.m., however, we had succeeded in taking from the wreck and conveying on board the *Kwangtung*, 89 boxes of treasure and 49 chests of opium besides a few packages of general cargo. Chinese divers and two Malays from the *Kwangtung* did the work so far. The tide was now so high, and divers so exhausted, that it was decided to give all hands a chance to procure some rest and food, and arrangements were then made to resume work on the night ebb. Moved *Kwangtung* to a safe distance from the Reef. At 6 p.m. *Bombay* arrived from Swatow bound to Amoy, bringing provisions, &c. The Amoy mails were transferred to her, and she proceeded on her voyage. Before dusk a portion of the officers, engineers, and crews were told off to guard the wreck, and a set of night signals agreed on in case of an attack by Natives, an event which appeared by no means unlikely, as they had been most persistent in their attentions during the entire day, and could scarcely be kept out of the wreck. At dark the weather looked a little threatening to the N. E., and the boats sent from Swatow with the native divers left for Namon Straits, in spite of their promise to remain in the vicinity.

At 8 p.m. the wind came out from N. E., gradually increasing, until at midnight it was blowing a fresh gale, with a high sea running. Fortunately the *Douglas* sustained no further damage, but no communication with her was possible. Thursday, 2nd May: It was still blowing hard, with heavy squalls of wind accompanied by torrents of rain, and thunder and lightning. Got up steam and moved the *Kwangtung* nearer to and to windward of the wreck. A life boat was dispatched more provisions sent on board, and the people who had been on board during the night were relieved. No work however was possible, as the sea was running high, and until 1 a.m. the upper deck of the *Douglas* was level with the water from amidships to right aft. At 11.30 boats were again dispatched and work renewed; at noon the *S. S. Kui Shu* passed down outside Namon, but did not appear to see the signals made to her; at 1 p.m. the tide was at its lowest, but not before the coming of lower hatchways, on account of the strong N. E. wind; at 2 p.m. it was rising rapidly again, and we had done very little except receiving a few chests of drug, which had floated to the surface. A great deal of credit is due to Mr. Young, third officer of the *Douglas*, who died for over an hour and set an example to the crew, so much so, in fact, that two of the *Kwangtung* Malays were induced to make another attempt about 3 p.m. and by 5 p.m. eight more boxes of treasure were hooked on and safely brought to the surface. By this time the tide was well up and heavy seas breaking entirely over the after part of the *Douglas's* decks, each sea as it struck her making her vibrate considerably, but apparently not moving or straining her in the least. By 6 p.m. the treasure and opium saved during the day had been safely transferred to the *Kwangtung*, a work of considerable difficulty and danger on account of the heavy sea which was still running. Captain Toppin and myself then sounded round the *Douglas*, and the former seemed to be of opinion that she had been set further on to the Reef since she first struck, as the soundings outside were considerably less.

At half flood we found on starboard side an average depth of 12 feet from the gangway right forward, and about a couple of feet more on the port side, but the Reef slopes down suddenly to the Northward and Westward. Judging by the soundings, by the comparatively little motion there was at any time, and the rapid rise and fall of water in the ship, Captain Toppin and myself agreed that there seemed very little hope of her coming off the Reef again; she seems to lay on a bed of rough, uneven rock, but without divers it was impossible to form a correct idea of the damage she has sustained. At dusk arrangements were made for the chief officer, third engineer, and Malays of the *Douglas* to remain by her all night; a set of signals was agreed on, and precautions taken for the safety of those left on board the wreck in case of an emergency arising. The night proved a very quiet one, and had divers been procurable much good might have been done on the ebb tide.

Friday, May 3rd, the daylight broke, there was very little wind and sea, but the tide being about half flood nothing of any consequence could be done on board the wreck. At 6 a.m. a fishing boat was despatched to Swatow with a letter asking for more divers, as the first lot had not found their way back again, and the Malays of *Kwangtung* were hid up from their exertions of previous days. At 9.30 a.m. H.M.S. *Dwarf* arrived from Amoy. Captain Bax visited the *Douglas* in company with myself and Captain Toppin, and we once more sounded round her with the following results:—

Port Side.—Under the stern at high water

7 fathoms; 2nd east, 7 fathoms; 3rd east, 7 fathoms; 4th east, 24 feet (gangway); 5th east, 13 feet (engine room and skylight); 6th east, 15 feet; 7th east, 17 feet; 8th east, 19 feet. Starboard Side.—Under the stern 23 feet; 2nd east, 6 fathoms; 3rd east, 4 fathoms; 4th east, 15 feet (gangway); 5th east, 15 feet (engine room and skylight); 6th east, 15 feet; 7th east, 15 feet; 8th east, 17 feet.

Capt. Bax offered every assistance that he could in any way render, and it was agreed that as soon as the tide fell sufficiently the 3 carpenters from the *Dwarf* should enlarge the hole in the deck over where the remainder of the treasure was supposed to be, and two of the crew volunteered as divers. In the meantime the crews of *Douglas* and *Kwangtung* were engaged in transferring to latter vessel some few packages of general cargo that had been recovered the day before, and in clearing the decks of the piles of rubbish which encumbered them, and in throwing overboard some of the passages of Salt fish which were floating about in the fore hold, the stench from which was almost unbearable. At 2 p.m. the tide was falling rapidly and at 3 the Carpenters were able to work at the Cabin decks, and extended the hole some 15 feet, thus enabling the Divers to work more freely. There were 4 volunteers from the *Dwarf* and a 5th, a rather protracted search they hooked on 5 boxes of treasure. Some few more packages of drugs and sundries were also brought to the surface. 5 p.m., junks and divers that left on Wednesday evening returned from Namon, but it was too late to recover anything more that night. Night watches were set, and the remainder of crews and officers went on board the *Kwangtung*.

Saturday, May 4th, at 3 a.m. boats were manned and sent across to the *Douglas*, and work was resumed. The tide was fortunately a low one, and 6 more boxes of treasure were found and safely brought to the surface; at 8 a.m. the native divers came alongside and 2 more boxes were recovered, thus making a total of 110 out of 111 that were on board the *Douglas*.

The last box was most diligently searched for, but up to 7 a.m. had not been found, and I then concluded it would be better to proceed on my voyage, as I knew that much anxiety must be felt in Hongkong as to the whereabouts of the *S. S. Kwangtung*. At 7.30, boats were hoisted up, and we left for Swatow, leaving Captain Toppin, his 1st and 3rd officers, and 1st and 2nd Engineers, at the *Douglas*, under the protection of H.M.S. *Dwarf*. Captain Bax and his officers were most kind and attentive, and anxious to render every assistance that they could. At the request of myself and Captain Toppin, Captain Bax kindly gave us his opinion as to the state of the *Douglas*, and the probabilities of saving her, and the following was his reply:—

"At your request I have examined the steamer *Douglas*, and enquired into the way she sank after striking on the Dioua Reef, and am of opinion that, from the rapidity of filling and the way the water flows in and out, there must be a very large hole in her bottom, too large to admit of her being got off, except by clearing everything out and floating her by other vessels alongside; and even this plan might not succeed, as the place is very open to the sea for work of that sort. If it did succeed, the cost would probably be more than the value of the vessel; I am, therefore, of opinion, that there is very little hope to save the vessel. I purpose remaining here some days to protect the property, until I hear how it is to be disposed of. I shall endeavour to save anything of value belonging to her or the cargo."

LATE TELEGRAMS.

REUTER'S TELEGRAMS.

SUPPLIED TO THE "DAILY PRESS."

LONDON, 2nd May.

The French Government has resolved to arraign Bazaine before a Court martial, and an analogous decision is imminent with reference to General Wimpffen.

Prince Charles Cremone is appointed a Queen's messenger.

The Tishborne Claimant has been bailed. It is rumoured that Don Carlos has entered Spain.

BOMBAY, 3rd May.

A terrific Cyclone took place at Madras on the 1st instant.

LONDON, 3rd May, 1872.

Count Arnim has assured M. Thiers of the good intentions of Germany towards France.

M. Harcourt is the new French Ambassador to London.

M. Bourgeois is Ambassador to the Vatican. Hongkong, 4th May, 1872.

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